

LEGISLATIVE AUDIT DIVISION

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Legislative Audit Committee Members
FROM: Angie Grove, Deputy Legislative Auditor
DATE: June 2008
CC: Mike Ferriter, Director, Department of Corrections
Pam Bunke, Administrator, Community Corrections Division
RE: Performance Audit Follow-up (08SP-30): Use of Electronic Supervision Technologies, Department of Corrections (orig. 06P-14)
ATTACHMENT: Report Summary – Use of Electronic Supervision Technologies

INTRODUCTION

In December 2006 we presented our performance audit of *Use of Electronic Supervision Technologies* by the Department of Corrections (department). The audit contained three recommendations to the department. In March 2008 we began gathering information from the department on their progress implementing the recommendations. This memo summarizes the results of our follow-up work in addition to presenting background information on the program.

Overview

Audit recommendations focused on expanding the use of electronic supervision technologies to improve efficiencies for supervising offenders. The department implemented one recommendation and partially implemented a second. The department did not implement a third recommendation.

BACKGROUND

Section 53-1-201, MCA, states the department will use at maximum efficiency the resources of state government in a coordinated effort to develop and maintain comprehensive services and programs for adult offenders. Department goals and objectives include managing a diverse correctional population through the strategic use of department and contractor resources while improving public safety and security. We examined the department's policy and objectives for current and future use of electronic supervision and whether changes to the department's use of these technologies would increase or compromise public safety. We also examined the cost-benefits the department might realize from expanded use of electronic supervision.

FOLLOW-UP AUDIT FINDINGS

The performance audit report contained three recommendations to the department. The following summarizes information relating to follow-up audit work and the implementation status of recommendation.

Recommendation #1

We recommend the Department of Corrections develop a formal strategy for the phase-in and use of electronic supervision technologies as a standard community supervision tool.

Implementation Status – Partially Implemented

The department partially implemented this recommendation. The department has not expanded electronic supervision technologies for offenders on regular probation and parole, although the department has expanded use of electronic supervision for offenders in prerelease centers (PRCs). The department now contracts with all five PRCs for electronic supervision of offenders considered “hard-to-place.” Hard-to-place offenders are inmates approved by the Board of Pardons and Parole for parole pending completion of a PRC. However, these are usually high-profile offenders that PRCs are reluctant to accept. The department anticipates PRCs will be more likely to accept some hard-to-place inmates with the additional level of monitoring provided by electronic supervision technologies.

Recommendation #2

We recommend the Department of Corrections consider the cost-effectiveness of electronic supervision when making offender placement decisions.

Implementation Status – Implemented

The department completed an analysis of the cost-effectiveness for contracting with PRCs for the expanded use of electronic supervision technologies. According to department records, the department will save \$224,110 annually, assuming all PRC beds are filled during the year.

Recommendation #3

We recommend the Department of Corrections seek legislation clarifying whether the department has the authority to transfer DOC commitments from prison to a community corrections program without Board of Pardons and Parole approval.

Implementation Status – Not Implemented

The department has not sought legislation to address this recommendation. The department and Board of Pardons and Parole met in January 2008 and agreed the Board’s approval for releasing DOC commitments from prison to community corrections programs provides an effective check and balance. Department personnel stated they have expanded their community corrections programming, which has increased the department’s ability to place more DOC commitments in the community. Through the department’s screening process for DOC commitments the department is able to identify those offenders for whom placement in prison is the best course. Consequently, there are fewer DOC commitments in prison, and thus fewer subject to the Board’s approval for release.